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HOME DEPOT SERIAL ARSONIST PLEADS GUILTY

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that Derek Wesley Hall, Sr., age 33, of Elkton, Maryland, plead guilty today before United States District Court Judge William D. Quarles, Jr. to setting fires at a Home Depot store in Edgewood, Maryland on August 14, 2003 and a Home Depot store in Bel Air, Maryland on August 17 2003.

According to a statement of facts presented to the court, Hall was a former employee of Home Depot who had been terminated in March for creating a hostile work environment. Hall was observed on security cameras in each of the stores shortly before the fires occurred. The fires occurred while the stores were open, forcing the evacuation of customers and employees.

Fire investigators determined that the Edgewood store fire was started on top of wooden pallets inside of the Garden Center of the store, and the Bel Air store fire was started in the lumber department. A punctured container of acetone, a pack of matches, and a burnt pamphlet were recovered at the Bel Air fire scene. Acetone is a special purpose thinner, cleaner and paint remover

and is extremely flammable.

Hall was also observed at the site of another fire at a Home Depot store in Newark, Delaware which was started by igniting a combustible liquid in the lumber aisle. A can of acetone with Hall's fingerprint was recovered from the Delaware fire scene. Hours after the Delaware fire occurred, the fire was set in the Bel Air Home Depot lumber aisle and an identical can of acetone was recovered. Hall has also plead guilty to arson charges in Delaware in connection with that fire as well.

Judge Quarles set sentencing for June 10, 2004. Hall faces a maximum sentence of 20 years and a minimum mandatory of 5 years on each count and a \$250,000 fine, along with restitution.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Angela R. White and Christopher J. Romano.

